

Daisy has all strings

British-born luthier Daisy Tempest's beautiful bespoke guitars are very much in demand – fetching as much as \$50,000 each.

By Rosamund Burton



In a small cabin surrounded by trees in Avalon, Daisy Tempest is working on her latest hand-crafted steel-stringed acoustic guitar.

"The back is made of English oak," the 30-year-old explains, standing at the work bench in the middle of the room. "It's not a standard choice, but because it's from, like, my backyard, and the tone is balanced by the torrefied cedar sound board." The fretboard is ebony and the rosette is olive wood, which she collected from the East African bush. Representing her being here in Australia is the head plate made of spotted gum.

Daisy is a luthier – a maker of stringed instruments. The guitars she crafts are heirloom art pieces. She makes two a year, works very closely with her clients, and hand delivers all her instruments. She was on a plane from London to Chicago last August, delivering two guitars to America.

"I saw this beautiful man with the most wonderful eyes," she recounts. She walked past him several times during the flight, but wasn't brave enough to start a conversation. In the emigration queue he was in front her, and at a loss as to what

to say, she asked him if she needed a visa. "Yes. Have you not got one?" he replied. "Yes, I do," she said. The conversation "cringe" (her words) ended, and she thought she'd never see him again.

But back in London two months later she noticed the guy on a dating app. He was a music producer and had been in the music industry for 12 years, and they had mutual friends.

"We went on a date and completely hit it off, but he was moving back to Australia in January." By a twist of fate Daisy had been asked to design a coffee machine in Melbourne, and she came to visit him in Avalon en route.

"We hadn't been dating long, but not only did I like him, I also fell in love with this area." So she packed up her workshop in London, rented this cabin and has been here since mid-February.

"And Rob is now my boyfriend." Daisy studied English literature at Edinburgh University and wanted to be a writer. But the sedentary lifestyle didn't suit her.

"I was quite ADHD and needed to move around." She realised she wanted to do something involving music and travel.

"It just came to me that I should be a guitar maker."

She describes herself as scatty and creative, so the precision required for guitar making didn't come easily, but after an apprenticeship to a luthier in Yorkshire and then training under the acclaimed Rosie Heydenrych – the only other female guitar maker in the UK – Daisy was ready to go it alone. The first guitar she made she swapped with a graphic designer friend in exchange for doing the branding for her business and designing her a website.

"I started taking deposits, but I made a lot of mistakes. I built guitars and ripped them apart to see how I could do better."

From the start Daisy realised that she needed to find a new business model for guitar making to make it commercially viable. To pay for the tools she needed she started doing sketches based around woodworking and selling them through her Instagram page. She wrote to the tool making company Lie-Nielsen and asked to design their Christmas card in exchange for a plane. Then on social media she began documenting her journey on becoming a guitar maker. Today, she has

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a You Tube channel with 120,000 subscribers on which she posts videos about woodworking tools and guitar-making methods.

Both her parents, she says, are “examples of creatives who are self-made”. Her father James McConnell is a talented pianist and composer, and her mother Annie Tempest is an artist, and creator of the *Country Life* magazine cartoon strip ‘Tottering-by-Gently’. With these role models she has combined her artistic flair, hard work and business acumen, and has a seven-year waiting list for one of her unique hand-crafted guitars. Robb Report, a luxury lifestyle magazine, is her agent, and the price point for these one-off Tempest Guitars is US\$36,000. Daisy Tempest has taken this craft to a whole new level.

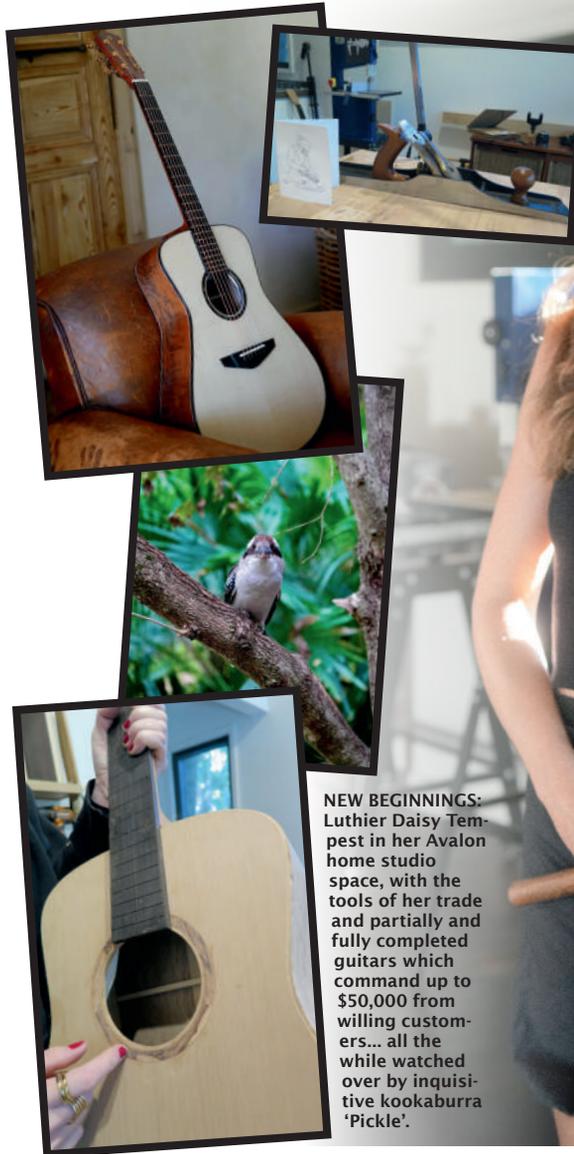
The early days weren’t easy. But Daisy has not only broken into the male-dominated guitar-making world, she is bringing her sense of awe to the industry. She is fascinated by the tools and techniques and captures her amazement on social media. Her current fascination is the gobar deck, a large wooden piece of equipment in her tiny home, which she uses to clamp pieces of guitars together.

“Woodwork has been quite a masculine thing, but I make it quite feminine.”

And Daisy is also captivated by Avalon – the local community... the nearby angophora reserve... the young kookaburra which sits in the gum tree outside her cabin, which she has named ‘Pickle’.

“I’m in this beautiful little treehouse and it’s just amazing” she says. “What is this magical place?”

*More info tempestguitars.com; youtube.com/daisytempest



NEW BEGINNINGS: Luthier Daisy Tempest in her Avalon home studio space, with the tools of her trade and partially and fully completed guitars which command up to \$50,000 from willing customers... all the while watched over by inquisitive kookaburra ‘Pickle’.



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